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THE HERMITAGE THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY.

BY E. T. L.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART FIRST.

SOME indication of general interest in the highest forms of art appears from such facts as that of the simultaneous engagement in European galleries of Mr. Cole and Mr. Closson, who are engraving directly from masterpieces for two of the leading American magazines. An additional sign of the popular tendency may be seen in the recent photographic reproduction of a few hundred of the pictures in the Hermitage Gallery at St. Petersburg.

It can hardly fail to be useful that attention has been newly turned in this direction whence information has been, heretofore, less valuable for precision than for amount. Of no collection has so much been written with so little accurately known—with even the number of rooms in this palace of art, varied in the accounts of voracious writers from seventeen to forty-one, the full and perfect existence of all these latter being unhesitatingly believed in, sans count, by others taking up the tale. Undoubtedly the clearest-headed visitors may be considerably bewildered by the vast profusion of such objects of art as the Hermitage contains.

Among its collections are famous jasper candelabra, seven feet high, worth 220,000 roubles, fine malachite vases, and lapis lazuli cups, the wonderful clock of Strasser, executing its brilliant passages from Mozart and Hayden, the Horloge du Paon or menagerie clock, the long celebrated and priceless *secrétaire* both musical and magical, the cabinets of jewels, the 15,000 cameos, of which a famous one was a gift of Josephine to the Emperor Alexander, with all the antiques of the Galerie de Malmaison, purchased by this ruler from Josephine's heirs, the collections of medals, the beautiful works of Canova, the tazzas of jasper, ivory carvings, and the multitude of "inimitable curiosities" which Catherine secured from Italy, while the somewhat excessive magnificence of the ultimate housing arrangement, completed by Nicolas, for all the collections accumulated by his predecessors, further divides attention.

Probably the number of pictures in the Hermitage is as estimated—twelve or thirteen hundred—although the absence of a catalogue necessarily has the effect of leaving some uncertainty on many points in the minds of visitors. From the collection having been largely formed by the purchase of entire galleries, it may be superfluous to mention that not all of its works are masterpieces. It is the better part of the contents which is represented by the four hundred and thirty-two fine carbon photographs by M. Braun & Co. of Paris, of which the full series has been imported by Messrs. Doll & Richards, and purchased by the Boston Athenæum. These reproductions are also published as a series of seventeen folios, each of about twenty-five subjects, as arranged in sets

received from Paris with the serviceable addition of an essay by Dr. Bode, of the Berlin Museum, wherein the works are separately discussed.

Single duplicates are to be obtained as desired, the complete series being an illustration of the gallery without preference as to any school or name, but with selections made as before suggested on the basis of simple excellence in each case.

The collection is unusually rich in examples of the Dutch and Flemish schools, acquired chiefly through the purchase of the celebrated Houghton gallery. A comparatively large number of the photographs are from these, and from the Italian and Spanish divisions.

examples of long celebrity are "Abraham's Sacrifice," a "Descent from the Cross," of which a reproduction is given in Mr. Mollett's volume on Rembrandt in the artist series, "Abraham Entertaining Angels," and the "Return of the Prodigal Son;" while the portraits—including three of the artist's mother, and one of himself painted in 1637—are greatly esteemed by connoisseurs who discover the finest small portraits of this master in the Hermitage collection.

Many of the most interesting portraits, in addition to these, are reproduced in the present series, among striking subjects being a "Portrait of an Old Jew in a Chair," "Portrait of a Man in Fur Cap," (recently engraved in the *Century*), and "Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel."

Young Jewesses, old Jews, soldiers old and young, a young woman holding a pink, another trying on earrings (named by some authors as the artist's wife), a portrait of a woman with hands folded, a "Portrait of a Turk," a "Portrait of the Calligrapher Lieven Willemszoon van Copenol," and a "Portrait of a Nun and Child," provided subjects of other quite characteristic works reproduced, although none so much so as that of Rembrandt's mother, forming one of the three examples before mentioned, and which is a work of unimaginable inspiration, belonging by this quality to the same class as the "Burgomaster," still exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum.

Subsequently to the transfer of the Walpole collection to Russia, a set of prints from selections among its contents was brought out by John and Joseph Boydell; and the previously published (1752) *Aedes Walpoleanæ*, prepared by Horace Walpole as a catalogue of his father's pictures at Houghton Hall, afforded much of the kind of information valued by collectors.

The engravings, by different artists, forming the two folios referred to—the frontispiece of the first of which is a portrait of Catherine II., and that of the second volume a portrait of Sir Robert Walpole, by Vanloo, engraved from the painting which long hung in the blue damask bed-chamber at Houghton—are in many instances fine enough to shame such of our boasts of new achievements of this kind as verge on extravagance.

These represent only "the most capital paintings in the collection of Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress of Russia, lately in the possession of the Earl of Oxford at Houghton in Norfolk."

Although some of the recent autotypes correspond with the same subjects, and while a few of these are known in various prints, the later reproduction also copies many never before illustrated by such means; but as artists have been allowed as full privileges as could be desired at the Hermitage, it is unlikely that many masterpieces have remained without frequent repetitions by copyists.

Much the most valued part of this rich collection is that acquired through the purchase of the treasures of Houghton Hall—England's long lamentation; although the Malmaison gallery secured by Alexander, comes well up to it, and Catherine's collections, both from Italy and France, were important.

THE NEW TAPESTRY WALL PAPER. FROM JEFFREY & CO., LONDON. From *The British Architect*.

A harsh critic once described the Hermitage series of Dutch pictures as "dreadfully numerous;" he would hardly have disagreed with the great number of amiable as well as cultivated people who have united in acknowledging that this gallery possesses the largest and best collection of Rembrandt's works in existence.

From these the new Parisian autotype series includes no less than fifty-four copies, although a very recently published account of the Hermitage states its number of original works by Rembrandt to be forty-one.

Of course the numerical fact is of less consequence than the quality of the pictures, if one is not to be correct regarding both. Among